

ANNOUNCING DECEMBER'S SPOT AWARDS

Dina Heidar

(Nominated by Paul Bergeron)

Dina Heidar, Environmental Scientist III for the Office of Environmental Services/Permit Support Services Division, Public Participation Group, accomplished a significant breakthrough on a recent assignment for the Louisiana Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (LELAP). She was able to recover the program data stored in the Accrediting Authority Management System (AAMS) database previously used by LELAP and build a completely new database. Previously the Department had paid \$27,000 a year for the development of AAMS' features, along with \$13,000 a year for maintenance and updates. Apart from the savings she realized for the Department, the database she has developed has an added value in that it is linked to an electronic spreadsheet which gives a snap shot of all the key activities performed by the LELAP staff, from the processing of applications for accreditation, through the performance of onsite assessments, issuance of assessment reports, receipts of corrective action plans for findings of non-compliance, responses to the corrective action plans, and issuance of certificates and scopes of accreditations for the successful applicants or letters of denial for the unsuccessful. This will enable LELAP to implement many parts of the corrective action plan submitted to and approved by the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) evaluation team which performed a triennial onsite evaluation of LELAP in July of 2009. Dina also recognized the discrepancy in method and analytes codes listed on documents shared by states participating in the national program. The resolution of the codes will enable LELAP to share its accreditation information with greater accuracy. Dina has quickly and carefully studied



Dina Heidar receiving her SPOT award

how LELAP operates and what LELAP needs in a functional database. With great enthusiasm, she has committed her time apart from her other assignments to assist LELAP in its goal to be the best environmental laboratory accreditation program in the nation.

Jonathan McFarland

(Nominated by Alex Appeaning and Bijan Sharafkhani)

We are honored to nominate Jonathan McFarland for a Spot Award. As an Engineering 6 in the Business and Community Outreach Division, Jonathan manages the Small Business and the Clean Water State Revolving Loan (CWSRF) Sections.

As part of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), the CWSRF Section



Jonathan McFarland receiving his SPOT award

received approximately \$43 million for wastewater improvement projects in Louisiana. After an exhaustive selection process, 55 projects in 42 parishes were selected for funding through ARRA. Comparing to the remaining states in EPA Region 6 (Arkansas – 6 projects; New Mexico – 17 projects; Oklahoma – 33 projects; and Texas – 20 projects), Louisiana supported the most number of projects (55).

Additionally, under the LDEQ CWSRF Base Low Interest Rate Loan Program, we selected approximately 35 wastewater improvement projects for funding. Jonathan and his team are currently juggling 90 (55+35) of these projects in addition to managing the Small Business Section. As a point of comparison, the number of projects that Jonathan and his team manage is equivalent to the number of projects the CWSRF program has executed since its inception in 1980's.

Because of Jonathan's leadership, we are on track to meet the stringent federally mandated deadline for bringing ARRA projects under contract (Feb. 17, 2010). Jonathan epitomizes an employee who goes "beyond the call of duty" to get the job done and achieve measurable results. Through constant communication with municipalities,

consulting engineers and the EPA, he ensures that milestones are reached and resources are allocated as needed.

On a personal note, Jonathan always serves with a smile and no complaints.

Catherine Rodgers

(Nominated by Judy Schuerman)

I am nominating Cathy Rodgers for a SPOT Award. While the only other administrative assistant in the Emergency and Radiological Services Division is out on extended leave, Cathy has had to be the timekeeper/payroll person for the entire 48-person division. With one-third of these employees being located in regional offices, it makes this task that much more challenging. It's not easy to chase down people who are not at the same physical location as you are, but Cathy does it. She has risen to the challenge remarkably well and doggedly gets the needed information from the appropriate people in time to meet the payroll lock-out deadlines. We greatly appreciate Cathy's outstanding work and dedication to her job. She accepted these added responsibilities very willingly and always does an admirable job with all of her assignments.



Catherine Rodgers receiving her SPOT award

Karen Vidrine

(Nominated by Chuck Berger)

I would like to nominate Karen Vidrine for a SPOT award for the month of December. Karen has been a vital part of the Water Quality Modeling (WQM) Section for approximately 18 years. Her modeling accomplishments are well documented on the LDEQ website. Her tireless efforts have enabled the LDEQ WQM Section to become one of the premier water quality modeling groups on the country. Her efforts allow us to continue our mission to meet our Court Ordered Consent Decree for TMDL development.

Our group develops Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for impaired waterbodies throughout the state. Essentially, we determine the amount of loading the waterbody can assimilate. Along the way, we determine permit limits and estimate required reductions in nonpoint loading. This process involves survey planning, data processing, model development, and report development. Many complex calculations and decisions are involved. Input from various groups within LDEQ, EPA, environmental organizations, and other state agencies must be considered as well as impacts to facilities, businesses, local governments and communities. The entire process can take as long as two or three years. The modeling and report can take as long as year to develop.

In August of 2009, Karen submitted two TMDLs for public review. These TMDLs have proven to be our most complex and contentious TMDLs to date. They were unlike any of our previous TMDL reports and have required an extraordinary amount of work. Karen encountered many obstacles to inhibit her TMDL development efforts and she had to revise her approach to the development and impact of these TMDLs. One TMDL report received comments addressing 80 different facilities. That is more comments than we have received in the previous 10 years of TMDL



Karen Vidrine receiving her SPOT award

modeling. Her persistence, fortitude, experience, and commitment to provide quality work enabled her to overcome these obstacles. As a result, she has revised these TMDL documents. In January of 2010, Karen will be submitting these TMDLs to EPA for final approval.

Karen was responsible for the development of a TMDL model training class designed for our survey group. This task was outside of her normal range of duties. The intent was to demonstrate how we use the survey data in our modeling efforts. This class was presented on December 14, 2009 by four members of our modeling team. Karen did an outstanding job despite setbacks with equipment and the absence of one of the instructors. The class was well received and the participant had plenty of pertinent questions. Requests for an additional class have been made.

Karen continues to go "above and beyond the call of duty" and maintains a heavy workload to allow our section to meet its Consent Decree commitments to EPA and our court ordered deadlines. She has the unique talent of managing multiple TMDL projects in various phases of production. Karen currently has two TMDL documents being submitted for final approval, one TMDL in peer review, and one TMDL in the final stages of development, for a total four TMDLs.



Her recent TMDLs have required the development of several new techniques and procedures. One such procedure involved relating nonpoint load reductions to more stringent permit limits in watersheds that are dominated by hundreds of permitted and unpermitted dischargers. She helped devise a method to relate the two loading sources in a way that is logical, equitable, and defensible.

Karen has been responsible for the many upgrades to our water quality model software, LAQUAL. She has developed many contracts to conduct the work and provided project management to ensure that the work was completed. The latest contract for upgrades was closed on December 16, 2009. We have received the latest electronic deliverable from our contractor. We have reviewed the model upgrades and look forward to utilizing the new version of our model. The new model version will be vital to our mission to conduct nutrient modeling in the near future.

Throughout all of this work, she has continued to provide assistance to fellow staff members. She is always ready to assist fellow modelers with any problems they might encounter. She also makes time to help our clerical and analyst staff with their individual tasks. Karen continues to provide valuable assistance to the Standards, Assessment, and Nonpoint Section, the Watershed Surveys Section, and the Permits Section.

